

CHRISTIAN READER HOUSE
Route 664, approx. 1,300 feet east of
Jay Street Bridge
Lockport Vicinity
Clinton County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-5531

HABS
PA
18-LOKPT.V,
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Mid-Atlantic Region
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19108

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PA
18-LOKPT.V,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHRISTIAN READER HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5531

Location: Route 664, approximately 1300 feet east of the Jay Street Bridge, Lower Lockport, ~~Lock Haven~~ Vicinity, Clinton County, Pennsylvania

USGS Lock Haven Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18. 295450. 4556980

**Present Owner
and Occupant:** Harry M. Kreamer
R.D. #2, Box 90
Lock Haven, PA 17745

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: The Christian Reader House is significant as an example of the nineteenth-century vernacular canal-era housing of Lower Lockport. As a collection, the canal-era houses of Lower Lockport exhibit simple design and minimal ornamental detailing. They also share similar two-story, side-gabled massing and a uniform setback from the road. Specifically, the mid-nineteenth-century Christian Reader House displays these characteristics in a vernacular frame design, which is distinguished by elaborate scroll-work porch details.

Lower Lockport's development followed a local pattern of early nineteenth-century agricultural land use yielding to residential subdivision in the wake of the development of the West Branch Pennsylvania Canal in 1834 (see HAER No. PA-188). Lock No. 34 (see HAER No. PA-188-A) of the canal system was sited in Lower Lockport in 1834 and the canal remained in operation until 1889, at which time it was rendered useless by a damaging flood. The canal served as a major transportation route in the pre-railroad era. In conjunction with the canal, the lumber industry also played a major role in the development of Lower Lockport and was central to its economy. Lower Lockport served as the head market for the lumber rafting trade on the West Branch. Many of the extant dwes in Lower Lockport housed merchants and skilled professionals--blacksmiths and carpenters--dependent upon the lumber trade. Other residents included relatively prosperous boatmen and laborers who worked on the canal. Christian Reader, the original owner of the house, and his son, Conrad Reader, who purchased the house in 1870, worked as laborers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: circa 1859.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description from the most recent deed: On the North by lands formerly owned by Nathaniel Hanna, later owned by William B. Hanna, and now owned by W. C. Bowser; on the East by lot formerly of John C. Clymer, now of Helen Grover; on the South by a public road; and on the West by an eight-foot alley separating this lot from lot formerly owned by Jacob Bacher, now owned by Sidney Johnson. Being fifty-five (55) feet in width, and extending back between parallel lines to the back line of the town of Lockport, as laid out by Nathaniel Hanna. Containing one (1) acre, more or less.

References are to deeds filed at the Clinton County Recorder of Deeds, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

- 1859 Deed, October 12, 1859, recorded in Book M, Page 614.
Nathaniel Hanna to Christian Reader.
- 1870 Deed, January 1, 1870, recorded in Book 29, Page 39.
Christian Reader to Conrad Reader.
- 1892 Deed, January 30, 1892, recorded in Book 49, Page 39.
Conrad Reader to Emma M. Gross.
- 1908 Deed, February 18, 1908, recorded in Book 79, Page 243.
Emma M. Gross to Harvey S. Laubscher.
- 1941 Deed, May 2, 1941, recorded in Book 139, Page 446.
Harvey S. Laubscher to Idessa Taylor.
- 1941 Deed, May 3, 1941, recorded in Book 139, Page 448.
Idessa Taylor to Harvey S. and Eva M. Laubscher.
- 1942 Deed, December 28, 1942, recorded in Book 144, Page 282.
Eva M. Laubscher to Fred and Frances E. Reed.
- 1944 Deed, July 7, 1944, recorded in Book 124, Page 345.
Fred and Frances E. Reed to Mildred and Calvin Englert.
- 1968 Deed, June 28, 1968, recorded in Book 223, Page 630.
Mildred Englert to L. Sidney and Lulu A. Johnson.
- 1974 Deed, March 8, 1974, recorded in Book 244, Page 1013.
L. Sidney Johnson to Harry M. and Emma J. Kreamer.

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4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: No original plans for the Christian Reader House have been located. The two-story frame house was built circa 1859 and has four bays, the entrance bay being the third of the four bays, counting from the west. The house has an "L" plan, formed by a rear wing that extends the east wall. Originally, the house probably was not raised and, therefore, was accessed at ground level, like its neighbors to the east. The house was probably raised as a precaution against flood damage. Besides the foundation, the exterior of the Christian Reader House has not been significantly altered. The interior has had some alterations as a result of flood damage.
6. Alterations and additions: According to the current owner, the Christian Reader House's walls were repanelled after the 1972 Flood. Other interior alterations include the construction of a closet in one of the bedrooms. The foundation, built of rusticated concrete-masonry block, is not original to the building. It is unclear when this additional foundation-work was added, but most likely in the early to middle twentieth century.

B. Historical Context

The Christian Reader House was built circa 1859, after Christian Reader acquired the property from Nathaniel Hanna, the developer of Lower Lockport. Reader was a German-born laborer. In 1870, Reader sold the property to his son, Conrad, for \$500. Conrad also worked as a laborer. The property stayed in the Reader family until 1892, and, later, in 1908 became the property of Harvey Laubscher. Laubscher lived in the Laubscher House (see HABS No. PA-5528) down the street and rented the Christian Reader House. The house continued to be rented for a number of years. For information about more recent tenants, see Vento et al.: 1989.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Two-story, four-bay vernacular frame house with a full-width front porch.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Christian Reader House is an L-shaped, two-story, four-bay building with a basement. The two sides that form the "L" are the front, or south, facade, which measures approximately 25'3", and the east-side facade, which measures approximately 32'. The front porch spans the width of the south facade and is 5' deep. The rear porch measures approximately 16' x 4'.
2. Foundations: Rusticated concrete-masonry blocks.
3. Walls: Clapboard siding.

4. Structural systems, framing: Balloon frame construction, sheathed with clapboard siding.
 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Front porch extends across the entire width of the first story. Porch is supported by five beveled posts, and two half-posts against the house. The beveled posts have elaborate brackets and scrolls with decorative keystones. Solid porch balustrade consists of vertical board with inset panels. The porch is raised on piers, with screens between the piers, and has wood plank flooring and a finished ceiling. Rear porch has a shed roof with plank flooring.
 6. Chimneys: An exterior concrete block chimney is located on the east facade.
 7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original front door contains a large single light over one panel.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First floor, front facade windows are six-over-one double-hung windows. Second floor, front facade windows are one-over-one double-hung windows.
 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Intersecting gable roofs with asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Exposed fascia, with an overhanging eave on the gable walls.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans: See accompanying sketch plans.
 2. Stairways: Original stairway consists of square balusters and newel posts with wide skirting.
 3. Flooring: Standard-width hardwood floors.
 4. Wall and ceiling finishes: The first floor has acoustical tile ceilings and wood panelling on the walls. The second floor has the original plaster-and-lath walls and ceiling. The bathroom walls have a pressed-metal finish.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doorways are framed with a simple architrave trim. Evident on the second floor are late nineteenth century vertical-board doors and multi-panelled closet doors.

- b. Windows: The first-floor, front-facade windows are six-over-one, double-hung windows. The second-floor, front-facade windows are one-over-one, double-hung windows. The window surrounds are simple and unadorned.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: Decorative metal heat registers, dating from the late nineteenth century, are found throughout the house.
- 7. Hardware: Original locks, handles, and escutcheons are found on the vertical-board doors on the second floor.
- 8. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The Christian Reader House, being built circa 1859, was probably originally heated by stove. Apparently, in the late nineteenth century, a furnace was installed, as is evident by the extant heat registers.
 - b. Lighting: The lighting fixtures at the Christian Reader House date from the middle to late twentieth century.
 - c. Plumbing: All of the original plumbing fixtures have been removed and replaced with non-historic fixtures.
- 9. Original Furnishings: As a result of interior renovations and numerous changes in ownership, original furnishings are no longer extant.
- D. Site:
 - 1. General setting and orientation: The Christian Reader House faces south on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. Between the river and the house is Route 664. East of the Christian Reader House is the John M. Williams House (HABS No. PA- 5529) and west is a non-documented property.
 - 2. Historic landscape design: The Christian Reader House's surrounding landscape has historically been a general residential landscape, consisting of a rear yard.
 - 3. Outbuildings: According to the owners, there was an old wood shed on the property when they bought the property (1974), but it has since been demolished. Presently, there is a modern shed.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: Floyd, J.W.C. Historic photograph PA-132, showing the dam in the Susquehanna River and Lockport on the far shore, circa 1900. The Floyd Collection is located at the Annie Halenbake Ross Library in Lock Haven.

C. Interviews: Mrs. Emma Kreamer, owner, October, 1991.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Clinton County Legal Records. Located at the Clinton County Courthouse, Lock Haven, PA.

Dashiell, David A. III. *Kreamer House*. Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form 035-WW-013. Harrisburg, PA: Bureau of Historic Preservation, January, 1985.

Hannegan, Susan. *General History and Description of Clinton County, Preliminary Research Report, Clinton County Historic Sites Survey, 1985-86*. Harrisburg, PA: Bureau of Historic Preservation, 1986.

Vento, Frank J., Philip T. Fitzgibbons, Scott D. Heberling, and James Herbstritt. *Phase I Inventory Investigations of Potentially Significant Prehistoric and Historic Period Cultural Resources for the Lock Haven Flood Protection Project, Clinton County, Pennsylvania*. Prepared for the Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by Vendel Enviro-Industrial Consultants, 1989.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Linn, John Blair. *History of Centre and Clinton Counties*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1883.

Maynard, D.G. *Historical View of Clinton County*. Lock Haven, PA: The Enterprising Printing House, 1875.

Richie and Stranahan. *Map of Lock Haven, Flemington, and Lockport*. Philadelphia: Richie and Stranahan, 1869.

Walling, H.F. *Map of Clinton County, PA*. New York: Way, Palmer, and Company, 1862.

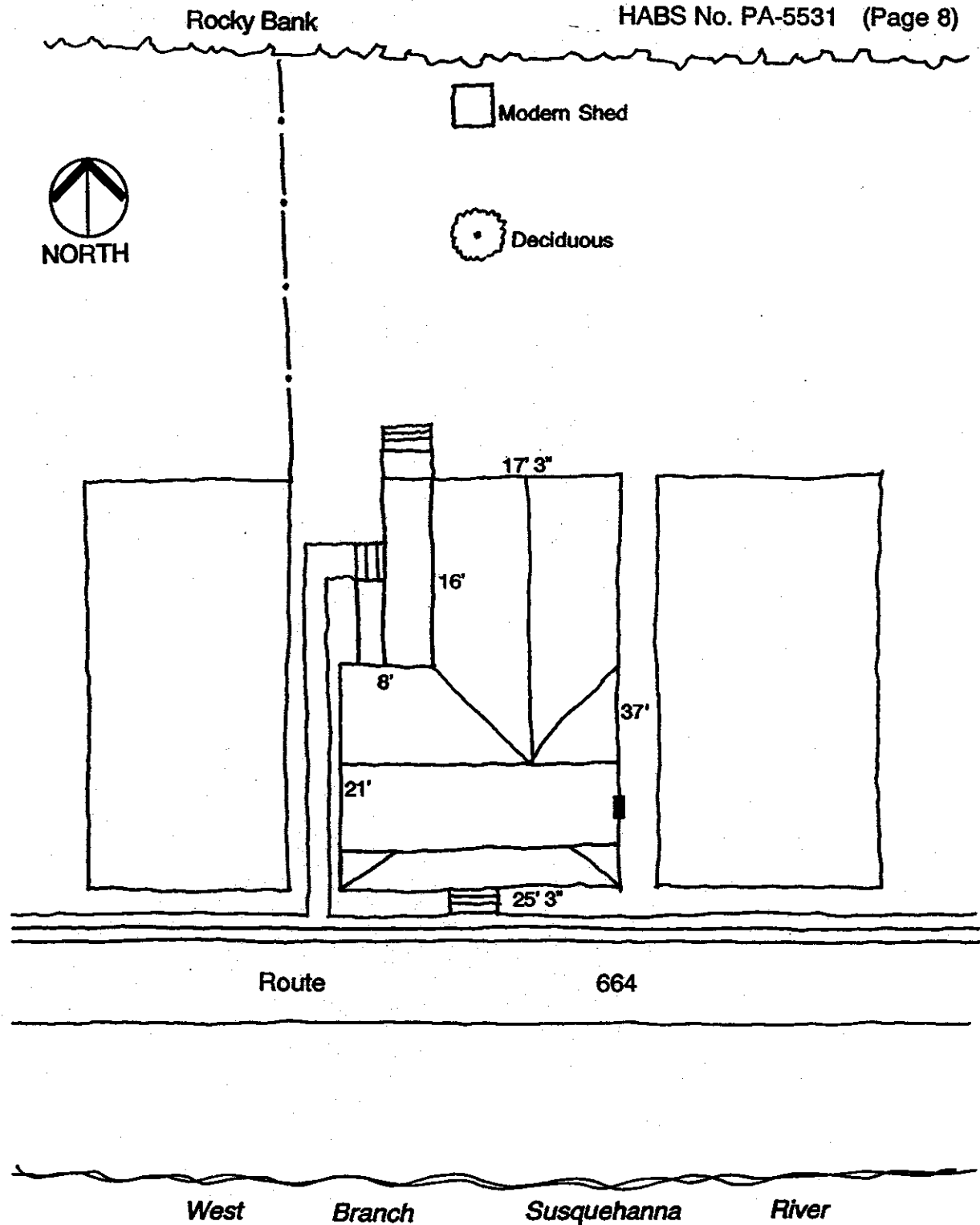
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation was undertaken in October and November 1991 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the Lock Haven Area Flood Protection Authority. The documentation serves as a mitigative measure for the treatment of historic properties that were identified and evaluated in a series of studies and that would be affected by the proposed Lock Haven flood protection project. The Christian Reader House is slated for removal to accomodate an induced flooding zone. The house will be marketed for sale in an attempt to have it removed from the property. If the house cannot be sold, it will be marketed for architectural salvage. The last recourse for the house is demolition. Documentation was prepared for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, by the Historic Preservation Group of Kise Franks & Straw,

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Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: M. Todd Cleveland, project manager; Susan C. Nabors, historian; Martin B. Abbot, historian; and Jill Cremer, graphics. Robert Tucher provided the documentary photographs.

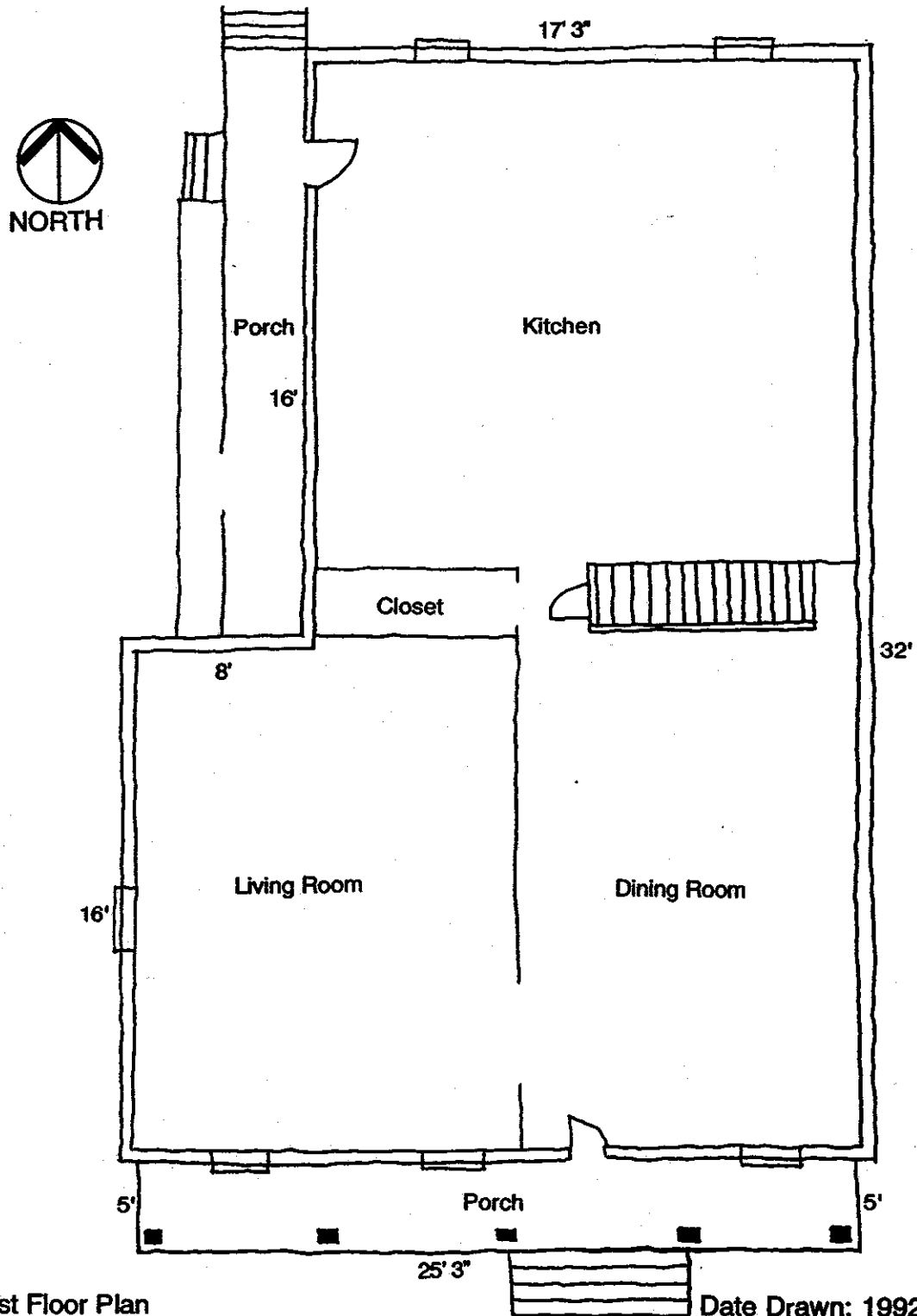
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Site Plan
(Not to Scale)

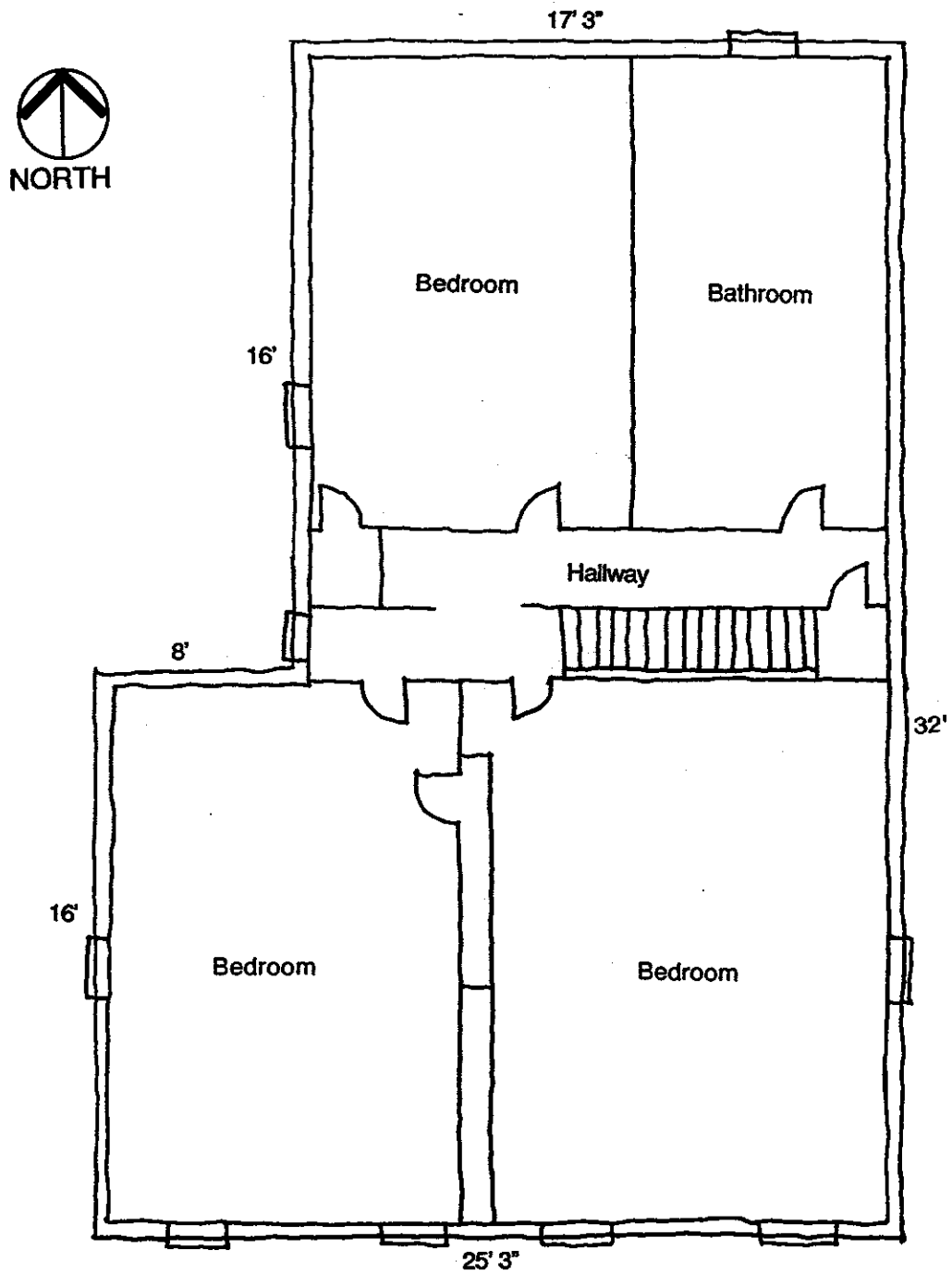
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First Floor Plan
(Not to Scale)

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Second Floor Plan
(Not to Scale)

Date Drawn: 1992
Prepared By: Jill Cremer